

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 031328Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8456

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

USUN NEW YORK 290

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SZAIN 2700

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - E.O. LINE ADDED

E.O. 11652: GDS REFTEL.

TAGS: PFOR, RD, TD, XL, US

SUBJECT: TRINIDADIAN INITIATIVE ON PUERTO RICO

REF: STATE 258165

1. KNOWING THAT I WOULD BE AWAY MOST OF THIS WEEK AT CARACAS NARCOTICS CONFERENCE, PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS ASKED ME TO MEET WITH HIM AT HIS HOME SATURDAY EVENING TO CONVEY DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE REGARDING THE INITIATION OF A DIALOGUE WITH PUERTO RICO.

2. I FOUND THE PRIME MINISTER IN A WARM, PERSONAL MOOD WHICH BECAME EVEN MORE SO WHEN I PRESENTED DEPT'S POSITIVE RESPONSE TO HIS PROPOSAL. HE SAID THAT, QUITE FRANKLY, IT WAS DIFFICULT AT THIS STAGE TO BE SPECIFIC ON WHAT MIGHT EVOLVE FROM PUERTO RICAN DISCUSSIONS, AND THIS WOULD BE A STEP BY STEP EVOLUTION. ALTHOUGH I STRESSED THAT IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR PUERTO RICO TO ADHERE TO COMMON MARKET TREATY, HE CLEARLY FELT THIS WAS NO BARRIER TO AN
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ASSOCIATION WITH CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM). HE SAID HE

WAS RELUCTANT TO PROJECT ANY SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS AT THIS STAGE SINCE HE HAD NOT HAD HIS IDEAS STAFFED OUT BY HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE GOVERNMENT AND "THE LAWYERS" MIGHT IMMEDIATELY POSE OBJECTIONS TO A SPECIFIC IDEA.

3. AS A GENERAL SCENARIO, HOWEVER, WILLIAMS FELT THE FIRST EXPLORATIONS SHOULD BE OF A BILATERAL NATURE DIRECTLY BETWEEN TRINIDAD AND PUERTO RICO. AS OUR DISCUSSION PROGRESSED HE DID INDICATE THAT HE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT ARRANGEMENTS WHICH COULD EVOLVE WOULD AT LEAST PARTLY BE ECONOMIC, PERHAPS ENCOURAGING CERTAIN JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENTS, OR MARKET DEVELOPMENT. ASSOCIATION WITH CARICOM WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED WITH THE OTHER CARICOM MEMBERS AND HE STATED THAT SOME WOULD BE LESS FAVORABLE TO PUERTO RICAN ASSOCIATION SO THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO TAKE A STEP BY STEP APPROACH.

4. WILLIAMS SAID HE NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO CONSULT KEY MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET, PARTICULARLY HIS SENIOR MINISTER, ERROL MAHABIR. HE SUGGESTED THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS PROCEED TO DISCUSS THE IDEA WITH THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT AND THAT BY THE TIME THE RESPONSE OF THE GCPR WAS KNOWN HE WOULD HAVE STAFFED OUT HIS OWN IDEAS SOMEWHAT FURTHER. ON QUESTION TO BE DECIDED WOULD BE WHETHER A VERY SENIOR OR A RELATIVELY JUNIOR ENVOY WOULD BE SENT. WILLIAMS OBVIOUSLY WAS TOYING WITH THE THOUGHT OF SENDING MAHABIR PERSONALLY, AND HE NOTED THAT MAHABIR PASSED THROUGH SAN JUAN SO FREQUENTLY THAT CONTACT WOULD BE MADE DURING A STOPOVER WITHOUT AROUSING ANY PUBLICITY WHATEVER IF IT WAS DECIDED TO START THE CONSULTATION ON AN UNPUBLICIZED BASIS.
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